The Cleveland Museum of Art

The Cleveland Museum of Art at Transformer Station Presents TR Ericsson: Crackle & Drag

News Release
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Tuesday, May 26, 2015

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A Tragic, Haunting Story of Maternal and Filial Love and the Relationships between Three Generations of a Northeast Ohio Family; Opened this Past Weekend

Cleveland (May 26, 2015) -- In his first solo museum exhibition, TR Ericsson employs photo-based work, sculptural objects and cinema to create an honest, yet tender portrait of his mother, who committed suicide at age 57, and of three generations of his Northeast Ohio family. *TR Ericsson: Crackle & Drag* makes a personal struggle public, coming to terms with a family archive's power to determine the past and the future. The exhibition's title is drawn from one of Sylvia Plath's final poems, "Edge:" "Staring from her hood of bone. She is used to this sort of thing. Her blacks crackle and drag." *TR Ericsson: Crackle & Drag* is on view May 23 through August 23 at Transformer Station.

"*Crackle & Drag* is a totally subjective portrait," said curator of photography Barbara Tannenbaum. "It is a loving commemoration but also an expression of puzzlement, anger, guilt and grief. His mother's suicide disrupted Ericsson's life and interrupted the course of his art. It set him on a different path from most of his contemporaries who produce Postmodern and Conceptual art. He foregoes the irony endemic to our time and in its place presents sincere, raw, messy emotion.

In *Crackle & Drag*, Ericsson employs a wide range of processes including photography, drawing, sculpture, painting, artists' books and cinema. He often combines techniques to produce unique hybrid media such as the nicotine drawings. Ericsson placed lit cigarettes in a box topped with a silkscreen; the rising smoke transferred nostalgic images from his mother's photo album to paper pressed atop the screen. The material references the yellowed walls of his mother's living room, stained by years of incessant cigarette smoking. Hazy and diffuse, the nicotine prints dematerialize along the edges, which lends them a dreamlike quality that repudiates their photographic origins. The artist has noted that, "the images honor the past while acknowledging that there can be something poisonous, even deadly, about looking back." Already challenging to read, the nicotine drawings have paled since their production in 2008 and will continue to fade, like memories, over the coming years.

In contrast, *Thanksgiving Day* will last for centuries. Etched into a 700-pound slab of black granite is the word-for-word transcription of a letter from the artist's mother that recounts in the form of a four-act play the horrors and dark humor of a miserable Thanksgiving Day spent with family in 1992.

The story told in *Crackle & Drag* is not a linear narrative; it meanders and curves back on itself to explore the variability and reliability of memory and photography, pondering their power to define the past as well as shape the future. Making this art, which has occupied the artist on and off over the last fifteen years, became a significant part of TR Ericsson's process of grieving for his mother—"an attempt to reclaim her life, and even my life after her death by way of art."

Programming

T.R. Ericsson on *Crackle & Drag*

Thursday, August 6, 6:30 PM, FREE
Transformer Station, 1460 West 29 Street, Cleveland, OH 44113
Crackle & Drag, a multi-faceted project including photo-based work, sculptural objects and cinema, investigates and reinterprets the tumultuous life of T.R. Ericsson's mother, who committed suicide at age 57. Explore the process, inspiration and meaning behind this unique exhibition with the artist himself.

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About the Cleveland Museum of Art

The Cleveland Museum of Art is renowned for the quality and breadth of its collection, which includes more than 63,000 artworks and spans 6,000 years of achievement in the arts. The museum is a significant international forum for exhibitions, scholarship and performing arts and is a leader in digital innovations. One of the top comprehensive art museums in the nation, recognized for its award-winning Open Access program and free of charge to all, the Cleveland Museum of Art is located in the University Circle neighborhood.

The museum is supported in part by residents of Cuyahoga County through a public grant from Cuyahoga Arts & Culture and made possible in part by the Ohio Arts Council (OAC), which receives support from the State of Ohio and the National Endowment for the Arts. The OAC is a state agency that funds and supports quality arts experiences to strengthen Ohio communities culturally, educationally and economically. For more information about the museum and its holdings, programs and events, call 888-CMA-0033 or visit cma.org [1].

TR Ericsson: Crackle & Drag [2]

Press Announcements [3]

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